

From: Joshua Barney
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/10/02 2:36pm
Subject: Microsoft needs competition!

I felt compelled to write in because of the current state and possible future of the internet and computing in general.

If Microsoft continues to have its way, no data on the internet will be safe, and our economy will likewise suffer. Microsoft's policy of "If it's broke, why fix it?" is startling to say the least, but understandable when they are in such a position of power. They don't have to worry so much about people fleeing from their services. For those that would wish to flee, there are licensing restrictions or bosses that are entirely focused on using nothing but Microsoft products to help keep them in the fold.

Microsoft thinks they are helping companies by making the computing world a Microsoft one. They are wrong. Truth is they're hurting companies by taking such a lax stance on security and quality. When there's no competition around there is no reason to improve.

They aren't quite king of the server arena yet, but even now they act like they own that market. They do not use the quality of technology to coerce companies into using their products, but very carefully orchestrated marketing and trickery. They mislead consumers into thinking that Windows is the fastest, most reliable and most secure OS. They try to make consumers think that "everybody else is doing it", the most recent evidence being a rigged ZDNet poll asking whether consumers would use Microsoft's .NET or Java-based web services.

While I do acknowledge that Microsoft has made some marginal strides in useability and stability in their operating systems, their security is still bar-none the worst in the industry.

They don't care about other companies. They only care about themselves. Now in today's cutthroat business world that doesn't mean much, and I wouldn't expect anything less from a capitalistic society, but you would think that a company as ubiquitous as Microsoft would at least take pride in its work, and at least consider other's problems of stability and security into account. If those servers aren't running, from any reason from instability to security breaches, companies are losing a very large amount of money.

I'm no economy expert but I can only assume that does hurt the economy visibly. The current state of our economy isn't too great either, so do we really need any additional danger to it by poorly-engineered software?

Microsoft /needs/ competition in order to get better. Not only to help companies and to help Microsoft, but to help the end user as well. So far I have been focusing on the server market, but the home user market is also affected by these decisions. Microsoft leaves open very serious security holes in even its software meant for home users (oddly enough, they call some of these holes "features"). When using a Microsoft OS at home, you can never be completely sure that your data is completely safe.

So there needs to be competition in the home desktop user market, as well. A variety of operating systems can easily take over what average Joe User wants to do at home, but Microsoft, intent on securing its perch, has made certain that support for the latest hardware and software is a Windows-only deal. This is the ONLY reason I see that operating systems like BeOS and Linux aren't more prevalent in the user's home.

If support was there from hardware and software vendors, even an operating system as "difficult" to use as Linux would be a piece of cake to use, and in fact to a large degree it already is easy to use thanks to the huge strides and hard work of millions of collaborating programmers across the globe, and companies that have decided to be sympathetic to those that want something other than Windows.

Hell, I'm just an animator. I have no interest in my computer beyond getting the best hardware and the best software, and in getting the job done. Linux does this for me nearly flawlessly. I can do almost everything a home Windows user can do, save being able to play a few games and use some hardware. I've based my entire studio under Linux, using freely available software to craft artwork and animation.

Despite this I still have to be careful about what hardware I get because Linux support is still a bit spotty. I shouldn't have to worry about that as a home user, though. Companies, likewise, shouldn't have to worry about having Microsoft breathing down their necks when they want to support an alternative platform.

I think I've said enough for now, and I hope my words, along with the words of everyone else, are heard. Swifter and stricter action must be taken against Microsoft to ensure that tomorrow's world will be a good one for everybody. Even Microsoft.

~ Joshua Barney
Founder and Lead Animator, Arctic Winds Animation

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"You can't have bread and loaf."

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